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Letter dated 2 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the non-paper "Republic of Belarus and human rights" (see annex).

I would appreciate if you would kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the seventieth session of the General Assembly under agenda item 72 (c).

(*Signed*) Andrei **Dapkiunas**

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Annex to the letter dated 2 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

The Republic of Belarus and human rights

Belarus and national human rights policy

In Belarus, human rights and freedoms, and guarantees for their enjoyment, are enshrined in the Constitution. These have been declared supreme values and objectives of society and the State.

The loss of one third of our population, the destruction of almost all our infrastructure during the Second World War and the aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster, when almost one quarter of the territory of Belarus was contaminated by radioactivity, have led our State to understand that the most fundamental human right is the right to live in peace and security.

In today's challenging geopolitical environment, Belarus is a haven of calm and order, and continues to act in the interests of regional security. This has been made possible by having strong State authority and effective socially oriented public policies.

As a result, Belarus is a member of the group of countries with a high level of human development. Almost all of the Millennium Development Goals have been attained, with five ahead of schedule: the Goals to eradicate poverty, to promote gender equality, and to improve maternal and child health, as well as the Goal on education.

Belarus welcomes the new United Nations post-2015 development agenda and will endeavour to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the leaders of member States at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015.

Belarus has worked continuously to improve legislative and law enforcement practices for the benefit of the Belarusian people, including by tapping into the potential of civil society.

While the current mechanism in Belarus for public engagement on human rights might not be ideal, on the whole it is effective and serves its intended purpose. Belarus will continue to work towards its improvement.

Human rights approaches in Belarus

Belarus has always abided by internationally recognized approaches to the protection and promotion of human rights: civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights are indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and complementary. Each category of human rights and freedoms should be approached on an equal footing and given the same emphasis.

Belarus is opposed to the exploitation of human rights and the imposition by some countries of dubious democratic models while hiding behind the language of major international human rights instruments.

Belarus has publicly stated on many occasions that it is unacceptable to politicize human rights or to use this issue as means of putting pressure on sovereign States.

Human rights cooperation between Belarus, the European Union and the United States of America

The European Union has recently been engaged in the unjustifiable use of international organizations' capacities in order to radicalize the human rights situation in Belarus for political purposes.

In this regard, the United Nations Human Rights Council, at the initiative of the European Union, established the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus.

Belarus has publicly declared on several occasions that this mandate has no prospect of succeeding because it is political in nature and has called upon the European Union to make use of mutually respectful and equitable dialogue without conditions, pressure or blackmail.

While Belarus lays no claim to perfection, it rejects European Union allegations that it has breached its international human rights commitments.

In a spirit of good will, Belarus resumed a dialogue on human rights with the European Union in order to demonstrate the openness and consistency of its actions. The first round was held in July 2015 in Brussels, Belgium.

Various human rights issues were discussed during the course of the dialogue. The outcome of the dialogue demonstrated the commitment of Belarus and the European Union to deepening relations, including in the field of human rights.

In this context, Belarus looks forward to subsequent confidence-building measures and to further cooperation with the European Union.

A similar dialogue took place in May 2015 in Washington D.C., United States.

Belarus and the universal periodic review

Belarus believes that the universal periodic review of the United Nations Human Rights Council is the only international mechanism that allows for an objective and reliable assessment of the human rights situation in each and every country.

As shown by the outcome of the universal periodic review, there are no ideal countries in the world.

In this connection, Belarus deems it unacceptable to replace the universal periodic review with a practice involving selective country resolutions based on double standards, in violation of the principles of universality and objectivity.

Belarus successfully completed the second cycle of the universal periodic review in May 2015, during which it submitted a national report on the most important human rights measures adopted over the past five years in order to implement the recommendations of the review's first cycle.

The report was prepared in partnership with civil society over four rounds of national consultations, which for the first time took place in Belarus. The

consultations were attended by various non-governmental organizations, including ones that do not agree with approaches taken by the Government.

Following the second cycle of the review, Belarus received 259 recommendations, 115 of which it adopted immediately.

The thirtieth session of the Human Rights Council in September 2015 adopted the report of the Working Group on the universal periodic review for Belarus. Belarus has thus made a voluntary commitment to implement 158 recommendations: six of these have been partially implemented and Belarus has taken note of another 101, owing to either their irrelevance or an inability to meet the deadline for periodic reporting on the universal periodic review due to a lack of resources or expertise.

Belarus takes the universal periodic review seriously and stands ready to cooperate constructively under this mechanism with all interested parties.

Belarus and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; cooperation with human rights mechanisms

Belarus endeavours to cooperate constructively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). On the margins of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, a meeting was held between President Alexander Lukashenko of the Republic of Belarus and Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

With the support of OHCHR, a number of thematic events on various human rights issues were held in Minsk with Government agencies and representatives of Belarusian public associations. One landmark activity in this regard was an international conference to examine how national human rights institutions are established and operate. The conference resulted in an international technical assistance project to study the advantages of establishing a national institution for the promotion and protection of human rights in Belarus. This project will be implemented through the United Nations/United Nations Development Programme Office in Belarus and the Council of Europe, with the involvement of international and national experts.

Belarus has expanded the list of invitations extended to thematic special procedures of the Human Rights Council. Belarus is open to cooperate with all human rights mechanisms that assist States in fulfilling their human rights obligations.

Belarus has also significantly increased its cooperation with the international human rights treaty bodies, and enhanced its international commitments by signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in New York in September 2015.

Work is currently under way with the Human Rights Committee to prepare a national report with a simplified procedure, based on the list of issues to be submitted to the Committee in 2016/17. Once it has done so, the backlog in periodic reporting by Belarus to the treaty bodies will be eliminated.